USACHPPM

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL CAREER GUIDE

Tools of Excellence

August 2005

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

Foreword

This career development guide is designed to assist administrative support professionals and their managers by providing general guidance on training and development to improve and enhance job performance as well as build qualifications for career advancement. This guide relies on individual career development plans together with increased counseling and mentoring by supervisors and managers. We can maximize personal and team growth as we mentor our people through the development paths outlined herein. I challenge all supervisors and managers to take a personal interest in developing the talents and abilities of our employees. This guide is a tool to help us achieve a critical strategic objective of sustaining a well-trained, competent, and professional workforce.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at 5-8717 or Stephen.Kistner@apg.amedd.army.mil.

Stephen L. Kistner
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DEPUTY FOR TECHNICAL SERVICES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction

This document is not a set of standards or a global career development plan suitable for all administrative support professionals under all conditions. It is intended to be a tool for supervisors and employees alike to promote and facilitate building the competencies necessary to achieve maximum effectiveness. Career development for employees results in mutual benefits by ensuring that these employees receive the necessary training and development, and the Center receives maximum productivity. The Center will provide administrative support professionals the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) needed to either advance into more responsible roles or hone their skills to "advance-in-place," within the Center or other Federal government organizations. See Appendix A for a list of reference information.

2. Scope

This career development guide will assist the administrative support professionals in the following positions within the Center:

- Secretary (Office Automation)
- Management and Program Assistant
- Purchasing Agent
- Supply Technician
- Library Technician
- Program Support Assistant
- Administrative Assistant
- Equipment Program Technician

3. Goals

The goals of this guide are as follows:

- To develop employees who: (1) are technically competent, (2) desire to reach their fullest potential, and (3) are prepared to compete for positions of increasing responsibility.

- To develop recognition among managers, supervisors, and staff of common career stages and competencies for administrative support professionals.

- To promote the preparation of an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that outlines training and development needed to help employees achieve both personal and professional success. (See paragraph 6 and Appendix B for more information on developing an IDP.)

- To promote consistency in the development of administrative support positions throughout the Center.

4. Responsibilities

a. Administrative Support Professionals—

- Become aware of opportunities, career options, and career paths.

- Become aware of positions within the Center and the KSAs required to perform those functions. (See Appendix C for a listing of job positions and web sites to obtain information concerning performance standards.)

- Initiate discussions with supervisor when they feel their positions are not accurately described or classified.

- Initiate both discussions and team work (with supervisor as well as staff) to identify duties that would facilitate and enhance the work of the office; increase organizational effectiveness; and provide meaningful, challenging positions.

- Initiate and obtain supervisor's approval for broader work assignments.

- Develop an IDP, with assistance from supervisor, for career training and development.

b. Supervisors—

- Be knowledgeable of career-enhancing opportunities for administrative support employees.

- Discuss career options and interests with administrative support professionals.

- Initiate discussions to identify broader work assignments for administrative support professionals.

- Seek career enhancement opportunities for administrative support professionals who demonstrate a willingness and ability to assume additional responsibilities.

- Assist in the development of the administrative support professional's IDP for career training and development.

- Approve IDPs, and ensure they are updated annually at the time of performance evaluations.

- Ensure a sound position structure within the work area, directorate, and organization.

- Document new duty assignments in writing and place with current job description. Request reclassification review by the Center's human resources management division, if appropriate.

5. Career Levels

One purpose of this career development guide is to outline general KSAs that should be acquired and applied by administrative support professionals, regardless of job series, during their career progression. Because of the many diverse job series that fall under the "administrative support professional" umbrella, some of the generic KSAs in the career stages may not apply to the specific duties for each job series.

The USACHPPM is responsible for providing the necessary training to ensure the professional success of its employees within the Center. The Center must ensure the essential training courses are made available to develop a diversified administrative support professional workforce. IDPs for administrative support professionals should be designed to use a variety of training methods to ensure the highest level of training quality and efficiency and to ensure an overall positive approach to training (see Appendix B).

For the purpose of this guide, administrative support professional career development is outlined through three career levels. Each level is designed based on the needs of

the Center, the supervisors, and the employee. See Appendix D for detailed information on the following career levels:

- Junior, GS – 01-05.

- Associate, GS – 06-07.

- Executive, GS – 08 and above.

Levels at which activities and training are identified in this guide are considered appropriate but should not be construed as the only levels at which training and development may occur. For example, a new employee starting at the associate career level, based on previous experience, may still require some of the formal training identified at the junior career level.

These career levels are intended to describe generic phases of career development. Supervisors should refer to the appropriate United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) manuals when preparing or modifying actual job descriptions (see Appendix A for information). Supervisors should coordinate these career development levels with the Aberdeen Proving Ground Civilian Personnel Advisory Center using the employee's position classification information (see Appendix C).

6. Individual Development Plans

The IDP is a tool for employees to provide a systematic approach to career development. It is a critical document in which the employee and supervisor identify and track career objectives in the areas of education, training, and experience opportunities (see Appendix B for more information on developing an IDP). The IDP ensures that employees who aspire to higher positions will—

- Have opportunities to help prepare them for progression.

- Have opportunities to strengthen their field knowledge, experience, and operations management capability.

- Have opportunities to strengthen their managerial and leadership skills.

- Have a road map to key on-the-job experiences and training.

When appropriate, for such positions as upward mobility candidates, IDPs should be staffed with the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center to ensure that objectives for different grade levels meet the requisite standards. See Appendix B for more information on developing an IDP. Also, see the *USACHPPM IDP Advisor and Manual,* located at: https://chppm-cims.apgea.army.mil/csb/UMandTraining/.

7. Job Shadowing

Job shadowing is a career exploration strategy. It is a work experience where an employee is given the opportunity to learn about a job position by walking through the work day as a shadow to a competent worker within that position. The job-shadowing experience is a temporary assignment to give an employee exposure to a position in an occupational area of interest. The shadowing employee will witness firsthand the work environment and the occupational skills in practice. It is designed to increase career awareness and upward mobility for those employees interested in career advancement.

The USACHPPM Training Officer and the interested employee will develop a comprehensive two-year IDP, with the supervisor's involvement and approval, outlining the following:

- Developmental Objectives and Activity. The IDP will outline the mentoring/shadowing process in a position that will be either in the protégé's line of progression with their present position or in a position that is within reason and directly supports the organization's mission. A checklist will be developed for the protégé to follow so he/she will have a good understanding and knowledge of the shadowed position.

- Formal Education. The IDP will also outline both short-term (within six months) and long-term goals (two years). The short-term goals will include training courses that the protégé can take either on-line or in a conventional classroom setting. Long-term courses will include college-level courses related to the protégé's present position or the position of interest and are directly in line with the organization's mission. This will also require the protégé to join and be an active member in a professional association that will enhance their knowledge.

8. Upward Mobility Program

The Upward Mobility Program is designed to provide an employee with the opportunity to move to a position within a different job series. An Upward Mobility Training Agreement should be designed to increase the employee's potential for advancement through classroom training, reading, work experience, and other developmental

experiences. These developmental experiences should be structured work and training experiences with well-defined objectives intended to enhance job KSAs. The Upward Mobility Training Agreement, as well as the IDP, is a must for employees in an upward mobility position for progressing non-competitively to a full-performance grade level. These documents will assist supervisors and employees when preparing the Total Army Performance Evaluation System Support Form preparation. See Appendix E for a sample Upward Mobility Training Agreement.

APPENDIX A

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX B

DEVELOPING AN INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

B-1. Overview

The IDP employs a concept that emphasizes discussion and joint decisions by the employee and his/her supervisor. Consideration should be given to the possibility of specific developmental experiences necessary to fulfill the mutual goals of individual career development and organizational enhancement. Each IDP is uniquely tailored to meet the needs of the employee, the employee's program, and the Center.

An IDP is a personal action plan, jointly agreed to by the employee and his/her supervisor that identifies the short- and long-term career goals of the employee. An IDP also identifies the training and other developmental experiences needed to achieve these goals that will benefit both the employee and the Center. Rapid advancements in technology and state-of-the-art knowledge require all employees to upgrade their skills in order to remain current with their job requirements. See the following website, https://chppm-cims.apgea.army.mil/csb/UMandTraining/, for preparation of an IDP. The information contained in this appendix will help employees prepare an IDP and plan their future career goals.

B-2. Preparing for an IDP

    a. Review current responsibilities.

    b. Assess KSAs. Identify strengths and weaknesses in each.

    c. Identify career goals.

B-3. Focus on Areas of Interest, Concern, and Need

    a. Career Issues. Career issues cover a broad spectrum ranging from getting up to speed in a new job to making a major career field change. Review the following statements, and decide which ones may be relevant:

- Assumed a new position and must learn the basics to feel more comfortable and productive.

- Been in a position for a while and are striving for increased competence.

- Need to update KSAs to remain current with the changing technologies.

- Require new skills or expertise due to changes in position responsibilities.

- Want to prepare for a promotion to move to the next level of responsibility.

- Want to broaden skills or expertise to allow more flexibility for future job moves.

- Want to change positions within current job category.

- Want to change positions within the Center.

b. Knowledge of Work Environment. Review the following questions to identify what is currently happening and what changes may occur in the near future:

- How is the mission of the Center changing?

- What are the Center's changing needs regarding the workforce; what new skills or areas of expertise will be required?

- What opportunities are available for developing these new skills or areas of expertise (e.g., work experiences, training, on-the-job training, mentoring)?

- How might my current position change within the Center?

- What new missions or projects within the Center are appealing to me?

c. Self-Knowledge. For the employee to gain a better understanding of him/her, the following questions may be helpful:

- What new developments in my position or field are of interest to me?

- What are my current strengths for pursuing these interests?

- What do I need to do to reposition my career so I can be involved in these new developments?

- What developmental activities, work experiences, and/or skill building would help increase my skills and expertise?

- What other areas might be of interest to me?

d. Integration of Self-Knowledge and Work Environment. To address the match between the employee's career goals and organizational needs, the following questions may be helpful:

- What areas do my interests and personal plans overlap with the changing needs of the Center?

- What KSAs are important for increasing or maintaining the quality of my work performance in my present position?

- What KSAs would help prepare me for opportunities or roles I might have in the future?

- What other interests for development are important to me?

e. Goal Development. A goal is a statement of a desired outcome or accomplishment that is specific, observable, and realistic. Based on the information generated from the questions above, the following questions will help the employee develop short- (1 year) and long-term (3 to 5 years) career goals:

- What do I want to accomplish, and what KSAs will I need to acquire or improve by this time next year (short-term goals)?

- What do I want to accomplish, and what KSAs will I need to acquire or improve in 3 to 5 years (long-term goals)?

B-4. The Supervisor's Role

Supervisors play a vital role in the development of an IDP. Their insight can assist the employee in achieving a balance between formal training activities and other kinds of training experiences. The supervisor assists in developing an IDP by—

a. Providing feedback on the employee's performance in his/her current position, and identifying strengths and areas that need improvement.

b. Acting as a mentor and coach by sharing their knowledge and experience.

c. Representing the Center's needs, goals, and opportunities; the supervisor can help align the employee's goals and objectives with those of the Center.

d. Helping to assess the employee's advancement potential and the qualifications necessary to qualify for other positions.

e. Serving as a resource and referral for exploring the employee's career development options.

f. Supporting the employee's training and development, and recommending training opportunities if related to the Center's mission.

APPENDIX C

POSITION CLASSIFICATION INFORMATION

Secretary (Office Automation) 0318
http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/gs0318.pdf

Management and Program Assistant 0344
http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/gs0344.pdf

Purchasing Agent 1105
http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/gs1105.pdf

Supply Technician 2005
http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/gs2005.pdf

Library Technician 1411
http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/gs1411.pdf

Program Support Assistant or Administrative Assistant or Equipment Program
Technician (Office Automation)
http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/gs0303.pdf

Also see the *Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work*
http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/gscler.pdf.

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APPENDIX D

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL CAREER LEVELS

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D-1. Junior Level

Initially

The junior level has been designed for new administrative support professionals so they can acquire the necessary instructions in basic skills and entry-level subjects. All new employees, to include administrative support professionals, are required to attend the USACHPPM New Employee Command Brief, which is held monthly. Initially, the junior-level administrative support professional should have the ability to—

- Perform routine and repetitive tasks with minimal knowledge of the Center's operation.

- Work under close supervision and receive new assignments with explicit instructions from the immediate supervisor.

- Be assisted or mentored by subject matter experts until appropriate KSAs are demonstrated for a specific task.

- Acquire an understanding of the Army and USACHPPM and how they interrelate.

Progressively

The junior-level administrative support professional will progress to—

- Perform standardized or commonly used rules, procedures, or operations requiring previous experience or training.

- Use judgment in making minor adaptations and modifications involving conventional operations and procedures.

- Perform tasks in a variety of steps that are not completely standardized.

- Assume full responsibility for limited procedures and management of day-to-day activities.

- Receive assistance only on problems involving unfamiliar methods or procedures.

Skills

The junior-level administrative support professional will develop KSAs needed to—

- Follow detailed instructions and directions when applying standard practices and techniques for specific tasks.

- Recognize readily apparent discrepancies or errors.

- Exercise a degree of judgment on details of tasks.

- Continue to develop more advanced verbal and written communication skills.

- Apply a limited background of knowledge and practices in the assigned area.

- Use various guidelines, handbooks, specifications, etc.

- Select the appropriate guidelines to resolve operational problems not fully covered by precedents.

- Interact with both the immediate supervisor and peers within the Center.

- Work as a team member.

- Apply knowledge and practices in the assigned area.

Career Development

Training is intended to develop the basic KSAs required to perform expected tasks at each appropriate grade level. The following list should be used as a guide and considered during the preparation of an IDP. Since each employee brings a different set of skills to the workplace, individuals may need some or all of these courses to perform assigned duties successfully.

a. Program Orientation. Senior-level management will provide new and entry-level employees with information regarding the Center's mission at the organizational, directorate, and program level. Activities include but are not limited to the Center Command Briefing, employee introductions, initial supervisory counseling session, and preparation of an IDP.

b. Formal Training. Formal training will include—

- Government and non-Government courses unique to job series, position, and employee needs.

- Requirements to gain general understanding of program.

- Program-specific requirements to gain in-depth knowledge.

- Computer instructions to include—

  - Productivity software (e.g., word processing, spreadsheet, etc.).

  - E-mail system.

  - Command Information Management System (e.g., timesheets, IDP).

  - Job series-specific software (e.g., budget, cataloging, property book, etc.).

- Communication to include—

  - Verbal and written communication skills (e.g., grammar skills, etc.).

  - Telephone etiquette/customer service.

c. <u>On-the-Job Training</u>. On-the-Job training will include assignments that continue to develop technical skills specific to the job-series level of duties, such as—

- Operation of equipment or "tools-of-the-trade."

- Assignments that develop skills specific to the job-series duties.

d. <u>Mentoring</u>. The junior-level employee will receive mentoring from a technically competent, credible, and more experienced administrative support professional. The Mentor will communicate corporate culture, values, and unwritten rules; provide advice, insight, counsel and support; and serve as a positive role model.

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D-2. Associate Level

The associate level has been designed for current administrative support professionals to assist them with enhancing and developing their KSAs in the performance of their currently assigned duties.

An associate-level administrative support professional has gained valuable knowledge and experience and—

- Is fully competent in all conventional aspects of his or her functional area; performs a variety of work related to an area of specialization that requires the application of a large number of different basic but established methods, procedures, and techniques.

- Has the ability to work with minimal supervision and direction.

- Independently performs most assignments when provided instructions as to the general results expected.

- Requires knowledge of an extensive body of rules, procedures, or operations.

- Assumes full responsibility for a large breadth of work and day-to-day management of assignments to include a total range of functions and procedures, varying in levels of responsibility commensurate with the grade level.

- Possesses knowledge of the organization and functions of the office to perform necessary procedures.

- Develops credibility and recognition among supervisors, peers, and subordinates.

- Shares knowledge and experience to develop junior-level employees.

Skills

An associate-level administrative support professional will develop the KSAs needed to—

- Possess a full range of technical KSAs with minimal direction and guidance, allowing the ability to—

    - Independently plan and coordinate work using different processes and procedures to accomplish assignments in a timely and effective manner.

    - Use judgment to independently adapt or modify existing standard procedures, as well as devise new approaches to problems encountered.

    - Analyze and present data or information according to established methods.

    - Analyze several possible courses of action, techniques, or procedures and select the most appropriate.

    - Prepare plans and procedures; modify or adapt previous plans and techniques when necessary.

    - Work as a member of a team, and progress to lead a team.

    - Advise subordinates on the use of appropriate processes or procedures.

- Understand the computer resources and information management technologies.

- Use technical and organizational knowledge to develop junior staff through formal and informal mentoring.

- Typically interact with different personnel levels within the Center.

- Improve and use effective verbal and written communication skills.

- Coordinate the work of junior-level employees.

- Serve on USACHPPM committees or process action teams.

Career Development

Training is intended to maintain, enhance, and broaden technical proficiency. At this level, an individual is expected to have received all training necessary to attain full competency. The following list should serve as a guide and may be considered during the preparation of an IDP tailored to the unique needs of the position or employee.

a. Formal Training. Formal training will include—

- Government and non-Government courses to maintain state-of-the-art technical skills specific to job series.

- Computer instructions to enhance productivity and skills as appropriate.
.
- Communication to include—

    - Effective listening techniques.

    - Effective people skills dealing with difficult people and customer satisfaction.

- Time management.

b. On-the-Job Training. On-the-Job training will include assignments that maintain technical skills specific to the job-series duties and assignments that provide opportunities to work with and communicate among peers, cross-train, and broaden knowledge as appropriate.

c. Mentoring/Job Shadowing. The associate-level employee may receive mentoring from a more experienced administrative support professional. The mentor will provide advice, insight, counsel and support; and serve as a positive role model. The associate-level administrative professional may also job shadow an experienced employee in a more challenging position. An example might be an employee in the Secretarial job series working with an employee in the Management or Program Assistant job series. This training experience must be coordinated with the USACHPPM Training Officer and the employee's supervisor.

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D-3. Executive Level

An executive-level administrative support professional is an individual who has achieved a high level of competence through the mastery of functional KSAs resulting from experience and formal training that has increased in difficulty and responsibility at each previous level. This career level has been designed for the more advanced employees who are responsible for the overall administration or operation of the directorate or organizational unit.

The executive-level administrative support professional has a recognized history of accomplishment and a proven ability to perform. Typically, growth is supplemented by academic study. A degree or equivalent credential(s) may also be necessary for higher-grade positions. This employee will perform some of all of the following:

- Work independently, receiving only limited descriptions of overall objectives.

- Receive minimal, technical supervisory guidance.

- Apply intensive and diversified knowledge in broad areas of assignments and related fields.

- Exercise subject-matter expertise and specialized skills.

- Use knowledge of the duties, priorities, commitments, policies, and goals of the directorate and organization to perform non-routine assignments.

- Independently carry out new or novel assignments.

- Make independent decisions to resolve conflicts or problems encountered.

- Oversee, coordinate, and review the work of junior- and associate-level employees.

- Coordinate projects with other offices (both within and outside the Center) to accomplish objectives.

- Operate with considerable freedom when planning and carrying out assignments.

- Develop administrative support professionals by—

  - Serving as a mentor to junior- and associate-level employees.

  - Serving as a leader of ad-hoc groups and committees.

Skills

The executive level administrative support professional will develop the skills to—

- Interpret, select, adapt, and apply a wide variety of guidelines or precedents.

- Apply initiative and sound judgment in planning and coordinating phases of work.

- Compile and analyze long- and short-range data trends.

- Understand the supervisor's policies and views on all significant matters affecting the directorate and the organization.

- Creatively adapt existing procedures, processes, or techniques to new uses.

- Apply considerable judgment when confronting and resolving a variety of complex problems.

- Thoroughly understand the job series-specific processes (e.g., document preparation and staffing, travel process, budget process, logistical system, etc.).

- Routinely interact at many levels within and outside the Center.

- Use effective verbal and written communication skills when dealing with various levels of personnel within and outside the Center.

- Effectively develop junior- and associate-level employees by sharing technical and organizational knowledge through the mentoring process.

- Serve on Center committees or process action teams.

Career Development

Training is intended to enhance technical expertise and management skills consistent with the executive-level requirements. Growth to the executive level should include academic studies. The following list should serve as a guide and may be considered during the preparation of an IDP tailored to the unique needs of the position or employee.

   a. <u>Formal Training</u>. Formal training will include—

   - Government and non-Government courses to—

     - Maintain state-of-the-art skills specific to job series.

     - Attain a greater breadth of skills in related fields (e.g., college-level courses).

     - Stay abreast of "tools-of-the-trade" specific to job series (e.g., software, equipment, etc.).

     - Become knowledgeable of program-specific requirements.

   - Job series-specific trade shows, conferences, symposiums, workshops, etc.

   - Job series-specific computer instructions to enhance productivity and skills.

   - Communication instructions to include—

     - Presentation skills/effective briefing techniques.

     - Dealing with Public Affairs, the media, and local communities.

     - Audience-based writing.

     - Effective listening techniques.

   - Resource Management—

     - Understanding the budget process.

     - Contracting Officer's Representative course.
   - Advanced Quality Management—

- Time management.

- Project management.

- Team building.

- Managing work under pressure.

b. <u>On-the-Job-Training</u>. On-the-Job training will include—

- Assignments that enhance technical skills specific to the job-series, as well as developmental and matrixed assignments within directorates and throughout the Center.

- Additional directorate/Center duties.

c. <u>Additional Considerations</u>. Additional considerations will include—

- Membership on Center committees or process action teams.

- Membership on professional organizations and committees.

d. Job Shadowing. The executive-level administrative support professional may also job shadow an experienced employee in a more challenging position. An example might be an employee in the Management or Program Assistant job series working with an employee in the Management or Program Analyst job series. This training experience must be coordinated with the USACHPPM Training Officer and the employee's supervisor.

APPENDIX E

UPWARD MOBILITY TRAINING AGREEMENT

1. Incumbent:

2. Directorate/Program:

3. Phone:

4. Grade

5. Target Position:

6. Plan Year:

7. Supervisor/Phone:

8. Goal:

9. Training Components: Incumbent will complete the following specific training components:

    a. On-the-Job Training.

    b. Independent Assignments.

    c. Formal Education.

    d. Other Self-Development.

TRAINING COMPONENT: On-the-Job Training   Date:

<u>Developmental Objective</u>   <u>Developmental Activity</u>

To gain increasing understanding and   *(List activities)*
experience in the *(occupational area)*
through assisting senior-level employees
(list specific areas)

TRAINING COMPONENT: Independent Assignments   Date:

<u>Developmental Objective</u>   <u>Developmental Activity</u>

To gain experience in independently   *(List activities/projects)*
planning, developing, implementing, and
evaluating *(list specific projects)*

TRAINING COMPONENT: Formal Education   Date:

<u>Developmental Objective</u>   <u>Developmental Activity</u>

To gain through formal short-term and   *(List activities)*
long-term educational and training,
knowledge, and understanding of
(list specific areas) in *(occupational area(s))*

TRAINING COMPONENT: Other Self-Development   Date:

(Note: Incumbent agrees to pursue degree programs with the understanding that those courses relevant to the current position will be funded by USACHPPM and, as necessary and without adversely affecting the *(occupational area)* mission, the time provided to attend; courses not relevant to the current position are the responsibility of the incumbent. Some courses will need to be taken on the incumbent's own personal time.)

Developmental Objective   Developmental Activity

To complete a *(list degree to be completed)*   Pursue degree at *(list educational*
in *(degree area)*   *institution)*

TRAINING PLAN APPROVALS

10. Review and Revision*: (This plan will be reviewed approximately every 6 months during the initial and mid-point performance review. It will be revised as necessary to reflect changes in the trainee's success and the mission.)*

INCUMBENT:

_____   Date:_____

SUPERVISOR:

_____   Date:_____

DIRECTOR:

_____   Date:_____

HUMAN RESOURCES REPRESENTATIVE:

_____   Date:_____

1 August 2005

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